



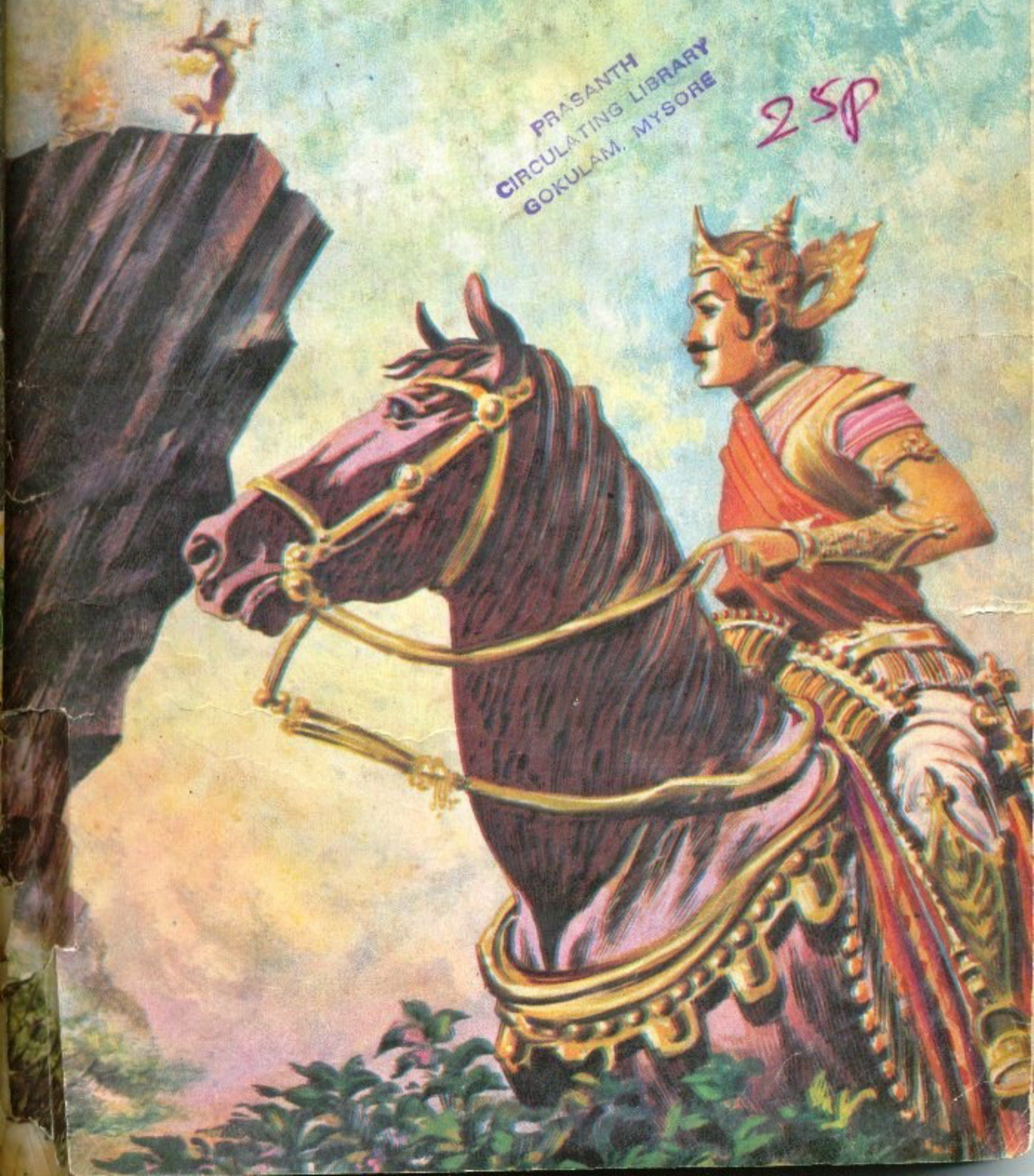
# HARSHA

THE GREAT RULER OF THANESHWAR

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If Harsha is remembered till this day as a great ruler, it is not only because he was a brave military leader, but also because he was a man of noble impulses, a great patron of learning and letters and he had great scholars like Banabhatta, Mayura and Divakara in his court.

72 Harsha came to occupy the throne of Thaneshwar at a very critical moment in its history. His father had died and his elder brother had been murdered by a powerful enemy. The neighbouring kingdom, Kannauj, ruled by Harsha's brother-in-law, had been overrun. Harsha not only surmounted these difficulties, but raised the small kingdom of Thaneshwar into the most powerful kingdom in Northern India.

Banabhatta's "Harshacharita" gives a detailed account of Harsha's life till he rescues Rajyashri. We know more about the political and economic conditions of his times from the account of Hiuen Tsang, who visited India during his reign.

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Editor: Anant Pai

Written by: Yagya Sharma

Illustrated by: Madhu Powle

Anand Prakash Singh

# HARSHA

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HAR  
HAR  
MAHADEV!



ABOUT 1,400 YEARS AGO, THANESHWAR, A POWERFUL KINGDOM IN NORTHERN INDIA WAS RULED BY PRABHAKAR VARDHAN. DURING THIS PERIOD THE HUNS HAD STARTED HARASSING THE PEOPLE OF THANESHWAR. SO THE KING SENT HIS ABLE SONS TO PUNISH THEM.

82  
AFTER A BITTER FIGHT, THE  
HUNS RETREATED.

VICTORY TO PRINCE  
RAJYAVARDHAN! VICTORY  
TO PRINCE HARSHA!



HALT! IT IS GETTING  
DARK. LET US STOP  
FOLLOWING  
THEM.

YES, BROTHER!  
LET US  
CAMP HERE.



THE HUNS DID NOT ATTACK AGAIN.

ALL RIGHT,  
HARSHA!

THERE HAS  
BEEN NO FIGHTING  
FOR SEVERAL DAYS.  
I THINK I'LL GO  
ON A HUNT.



WHILE HUNTING FAR,  
AWAY FROM THE CAMP,  
HARSHA SAW  
SOMEBODY  
RIDING  
TOWARDS HIM.

HE SEEMS  
TO BE IN A  
GREAT  
HURRY.

PRINCE HARSHA,  
YOUR FATHER IS VERY  
ILL. HE WANTS TO SEE  
YOU AND PRINCE  
RAJYA.

I'LL GO TO  
HIM. YOU  
INFORM MY  
BROTHER.


BOTH PRINCES RUSHED TO THANESHWAR, BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE.

YOUR FATHER  
WAS A  
NOBLE KING.

A FEW DAYS LATER—


PRINCE RAJYA, YOU WILL NOW  
HAVE TO SIT ON THE  
THRONE.

OH, NO!  
LET HARSHA  
BE THE KING.




PRINCE HARSHA  
IS RIGHT,  
SIR.

CERTAINLY NOT.  
BEING THE ELDER BROTHER,  
IT IS YOUR RIGHT  
AND DUTY TO RULE.



LONG LIVE  
KING  
RAJYAVARDHAN


MY  
BROTHERS  
ARE YOUNG AND  
INEXPERIENCED. PLEASE  
GUIDE THEM.



IF YOU  
WISH, I WILL GO  
AND MEET THEM  
AFTER THE SPRING  
FESTIVAL.

RAJYASHRI, THEIR SISTER, WAS WORRIED. SHE TALKED  
TO HER HUSBAND GRAHAVARMAN, THE KING OF KANNAUJ.

MEANWHILE, DEVGUPTA, THE GREEDY KING OF MALWA  
WAS BUSY PLOTTING.



THE TIME  
IS RIPE.  
WE CAN NOW GRAB  
THE KINGDOMS OF  
THANESHWAR AND  
KANNAUJ.

BUT  
THEY ARE  
VERY POWERFUL,  
SIR.

I KNOW. BUT IF WE KILL GRAHA-  
VARMAN, THE INEXPERIENCED  
RAJYAVARDHAN WILL NOT BE  
ABLE TO DEFEND BOTH  
KINGDOMS.

BUT HOW ARE  
WE GOING TO KILL  
GRAHAVARMAN?



I HAVE A PLAN. DURING  
THE SPRING FESTIVAL,  
WE WILL DISGUISE OUR-  
SELVES AS SIMPLE  
PEASANTS AND MINGLE  
WITH THE COMMONERS  
OF KANNAUJ. WHEN  
GRAHAVARMAN COMES  
TO CELEBRATE THE  
FESTIVAL WITH HIS  
PEOPLE, WE WILL  
KILL HIM.



ACCORDING TO THEIR PLAN, DEVGUPTA AND HIS SOLDIERS DRESSED IN ORDINARY CLOTHES, MINGLED WITH THE PEOPLE OF KANNAUJ. THEN AS KING GRAHAVARMAN WAS ENTERING A TEMPLE -



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AFTER KILLING GRAHAVARMAN, DEVGUPTA  
FORCIBLY CARRIED RAJYASHRI WITH HIM.

HELP!  
HELP!



THE NEWS OF DEVGUPTA'S TREACHERY  
REACHED RAJYAVARDHAN.

MAHARAJ,  
KING DEVGUPTA OF  
MALWA, HAS CARRIED AWAY  
YOUR SISTER.

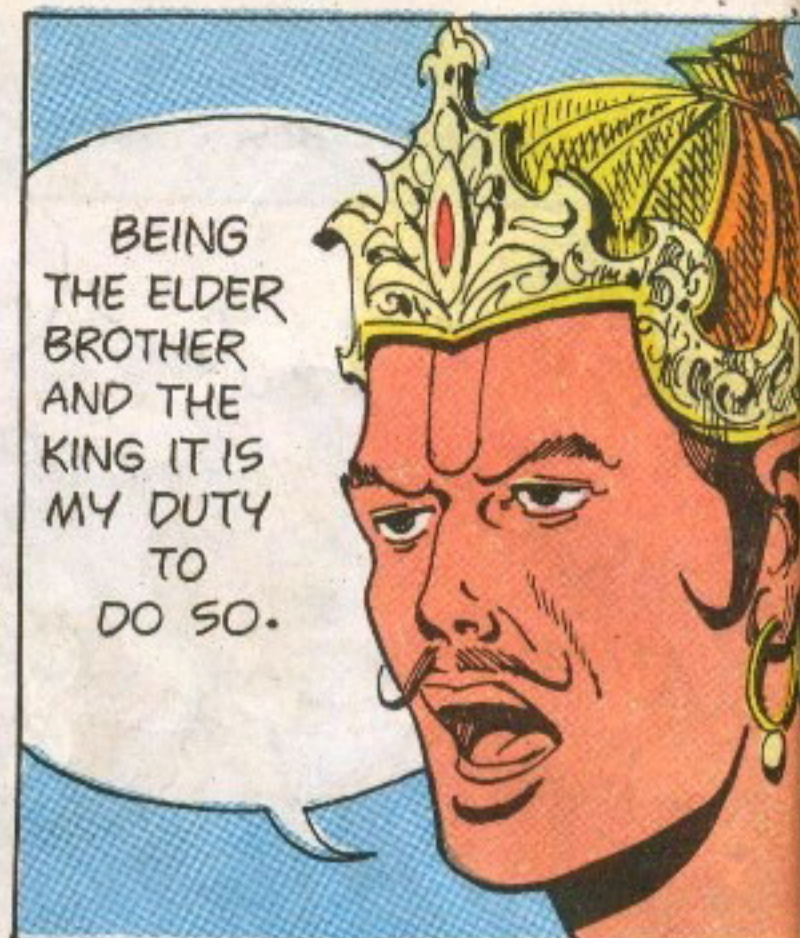


DEVGUPTA  
HAS INVITED HIS  
DEATH.



MAHARAJ,  
ALLOW ME TO  
ATTACK  
MALWA.

NO,  
HARSHA!



BEING  
THE ELDER  
BROTHER  
AND THE  
KING IT IS  
MY DUTY  
TO  
DO SO.



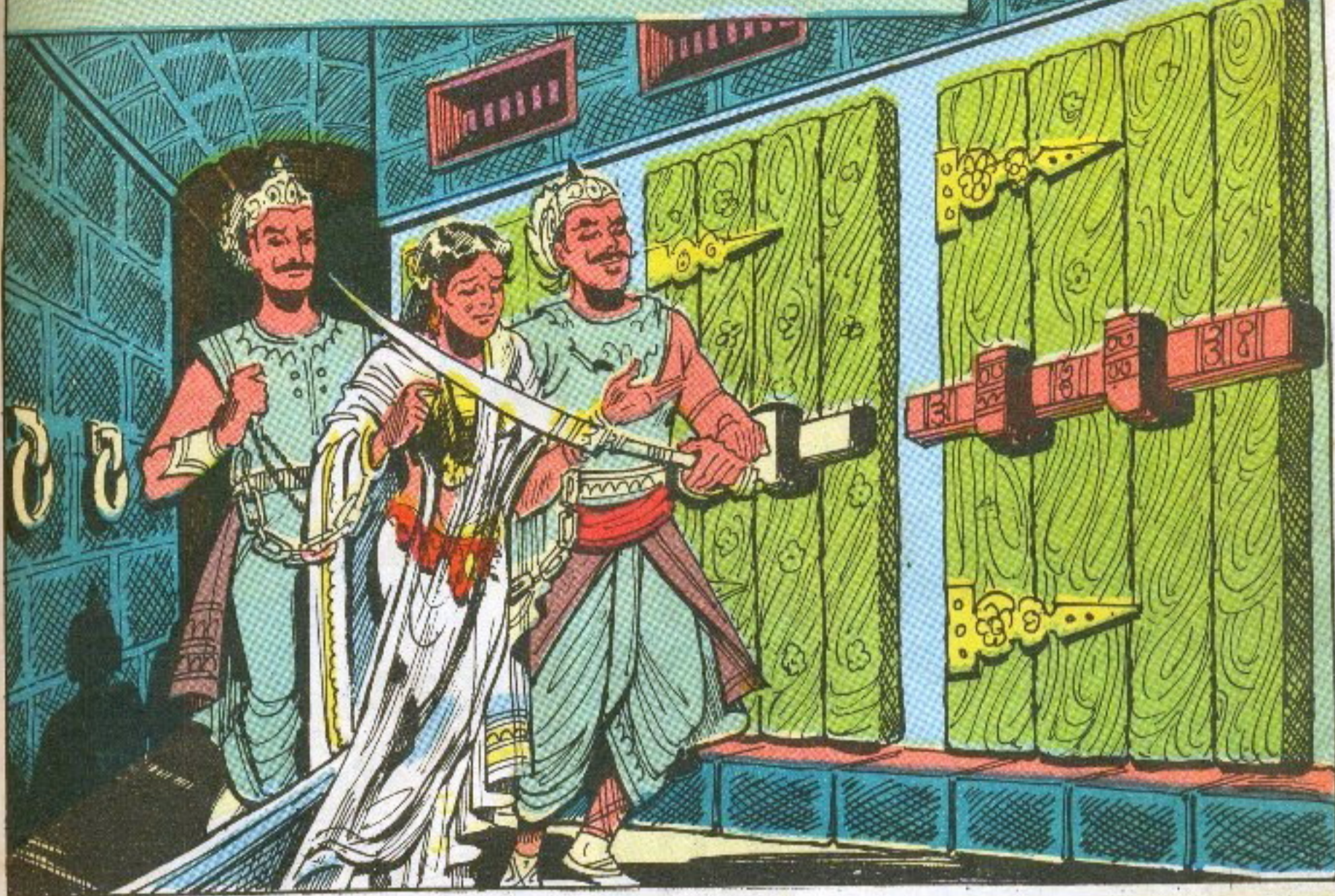
YOU HAVE  
BEHAVED  
LIKE A  
COWARD.

MEANWHILE IN MALWA-

SAY WHATEVER YOU  
LIKE. BUT I SHALL  
SOON BE THE KING OF  
KANNAU AS WELL AS  
THANESHWAR.

IMPRISON HER.  
LET HER LEARN TO  
RESPECT A  
KING.

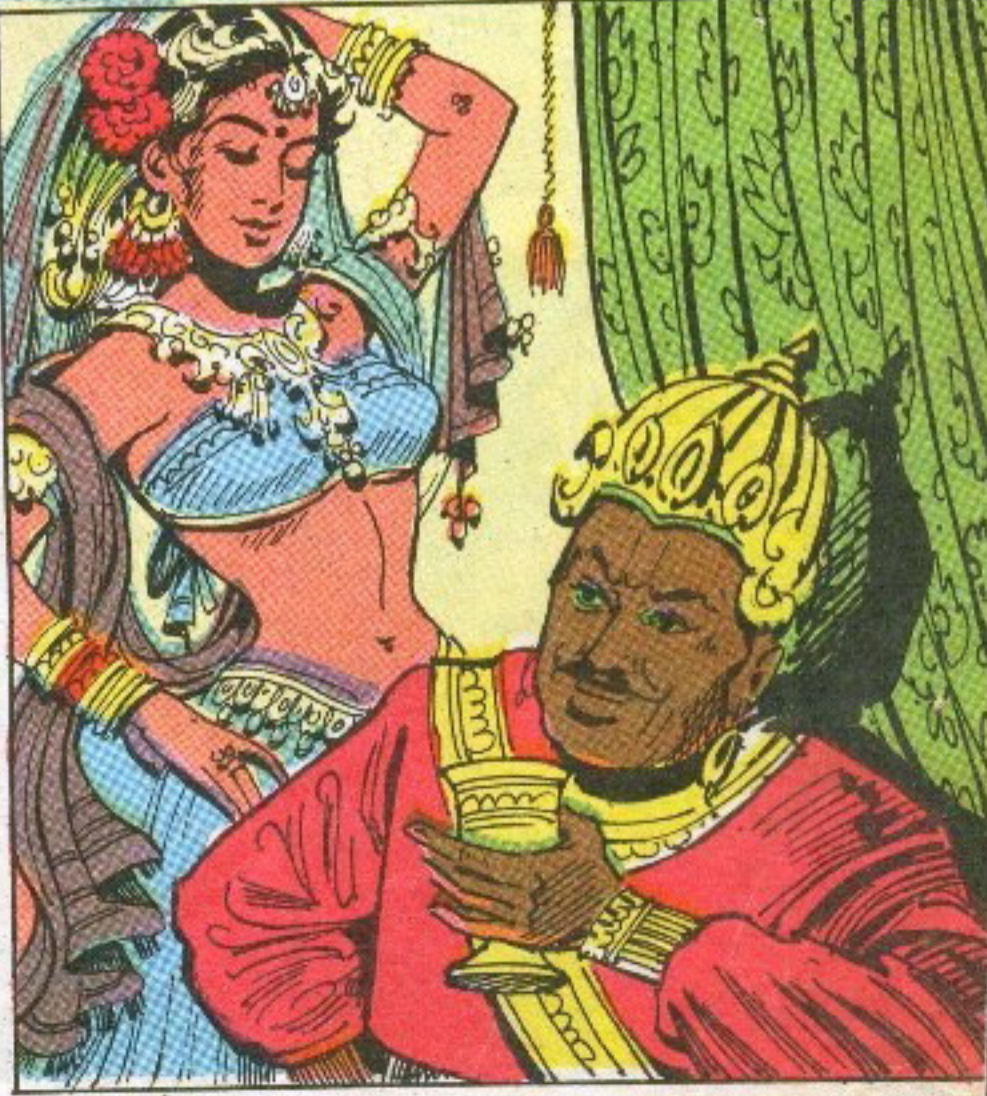
THE SIGHTS IN THE PRISON DISTURBED RAJYASHRI.



THE PAINFUL CRIES OF OTHER PRISONERS AGONISED HER HEART AND SOUL.



WHILE RAJYASHRI WAS SUFFERING MENTALLY, DEVGUPTA WAS ENJOYING HIMSELF.



JUST THEN DEVGUPTA RECEIVED A MESSAGE.

RAJYAVARDHAN IS PREPARING TO ATTACK US, SIR!

I EXPECTED THIS. GO AND CALL KING SHASHANK OF GAUD. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.

VERY SOON DEVGUPTA WAS SCHEMING WITH SHASHANK.

I WILL SHARE HALF OF THE KINGDOMS OF THANE-SHWAR AND KANNAUJ WITH YOU IF YOU HELP ME.

I WILL. WHAT MUST I DO?

WIN RAJYAVARDHAN'S CONFIDENCE AND ACCOMPANY HIM IN HIS ATTACK ON ME.

WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS, ATTACK RAJYAVARDHAN FROM THE REAR. ONCE HE IS DEAD, WE'VE AS GOOD AS WON.

YOUR PLAN IS EXCELLENT. WE SHALL DEFINITELY SUCCEED.


SO, SHASHANK WITH HIS EVIL INTENTIONS  
MARCHED WITH RAJYAVARDHAN TOWARDS MALWA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU  
FOR YOUR HELP, KING  
SHASHANK. YOU SHALL  
ALWAYS BE MY MOST  
TRUSTED FRIEND.

MY PERSONAL GUARDS  
SHALL PROTECT YOU  
WHILE YOU  
FIGHT.




BECAUSE OF THE BATTLE, EVERYTHING WAS DISORGANISED IN DEVGUPTA'S PRISON.



WE NEED ALL THE  
SOLDIERS. LEAVE ONLY  
ONE MAN TO  
GUARD THE  
PRISON.

THE SOLDIER LEFT TO GUARD  
THE PRISON, POSSESSED A NOBLE HEART.



THIS SECRET  
PASSAGE WILL  
CARRY YOU TO THE  
JUNGLE.

THANK YOU.  
YOU ARE VERY  
NOBLE. PLEASE TAKE  
CARE OF YOURSELF.

THUS RAJYASHRI ESCAPED FROM  
DEVGUPTA'S PRISON.



DEVGUPTA'S SOLDIERS WERE PATROLLING  
THE JUNGLE, BUT LUCKILY SHE WAS  
NOT SPOTTED BY THEM.



FINALLY RAJYASHRI  
ESCAPED INTO THE JUNGLE.



MEANWHILE RAJYAVARDHAN FOUGHT FIERCELY. SHASHANK WAS HELPLESS AS HE WAS SURROUNDED BY RAJYAVARDHAN'S PERSONAL GUARDS.

FINALLY RAJYAVARDHAN KILLED DEVGUPTA AND WON THE BATTLE.

VICTORY TO MAHARAJ RAJYAVARDHAN.

SHASHANK WAS VERY UPSET OVER THE DEATH OF DEVGUPTA.

WITH DEVGUPTA'S DEATH, MY DREAMS ARE ALSO SHATTERED.

MEANWHILE, RAJYASHRI WAS  
DISTURBED OVER HER FATE.

THERE IS  
NOBODY TO  
HELP ME.

WHY SHOULD I  
LIVE ANY  
MORE.

BROTHER  
HARSHA!

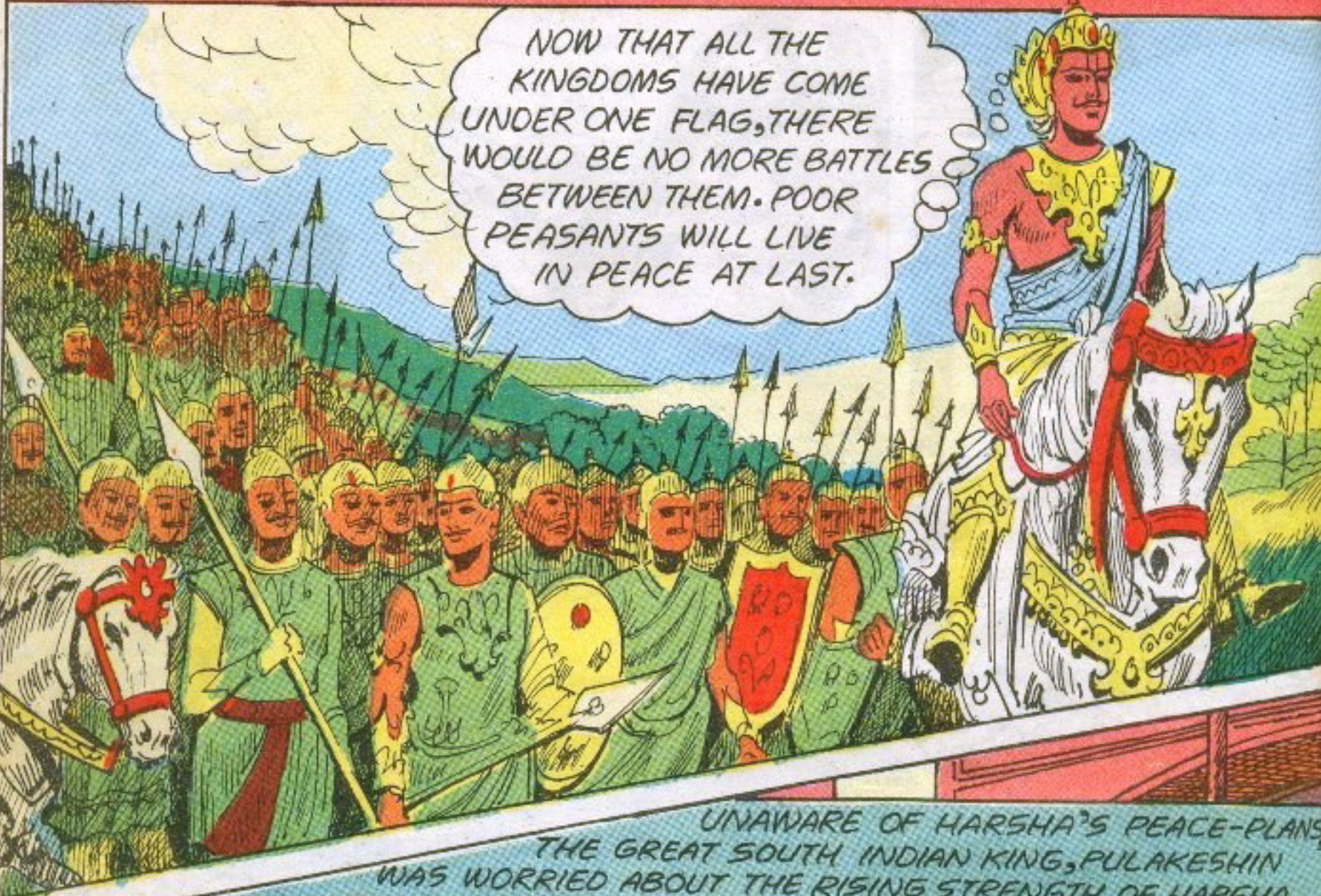
STOP!  
SISTER  
STOP!

YES,  
BUT STILL  
OTHERS WOULD  
CONTINUE TO  
SUFFER, BECAUSE  
OF PETTY QUARRELS  
BETWEEN DIFFERENT  
KINGDOMS.

YOUR  
BAD DAYS ARE  
NOW OVER,  
DEAR  
SISTER.


I PLEDGE  
THAT I WILL  
UPROOT THE  
CAUSE OF  
THESE SU-  
FERING

AND VERY SOON HARSHA CONQUERED THE VARIOUS SMALL KINGDOMS TO BRING LASTING PEACE IN NORTHERN INDIA.



NOW THAT ALL THE KINGDOMS HAVE COME UNDER ONE FLAG, THERE WOULD BE NO MORE BATTLES BETWEEN THEM. POOR PEASANTS WILL LIVE IN PEACE AT LAST.

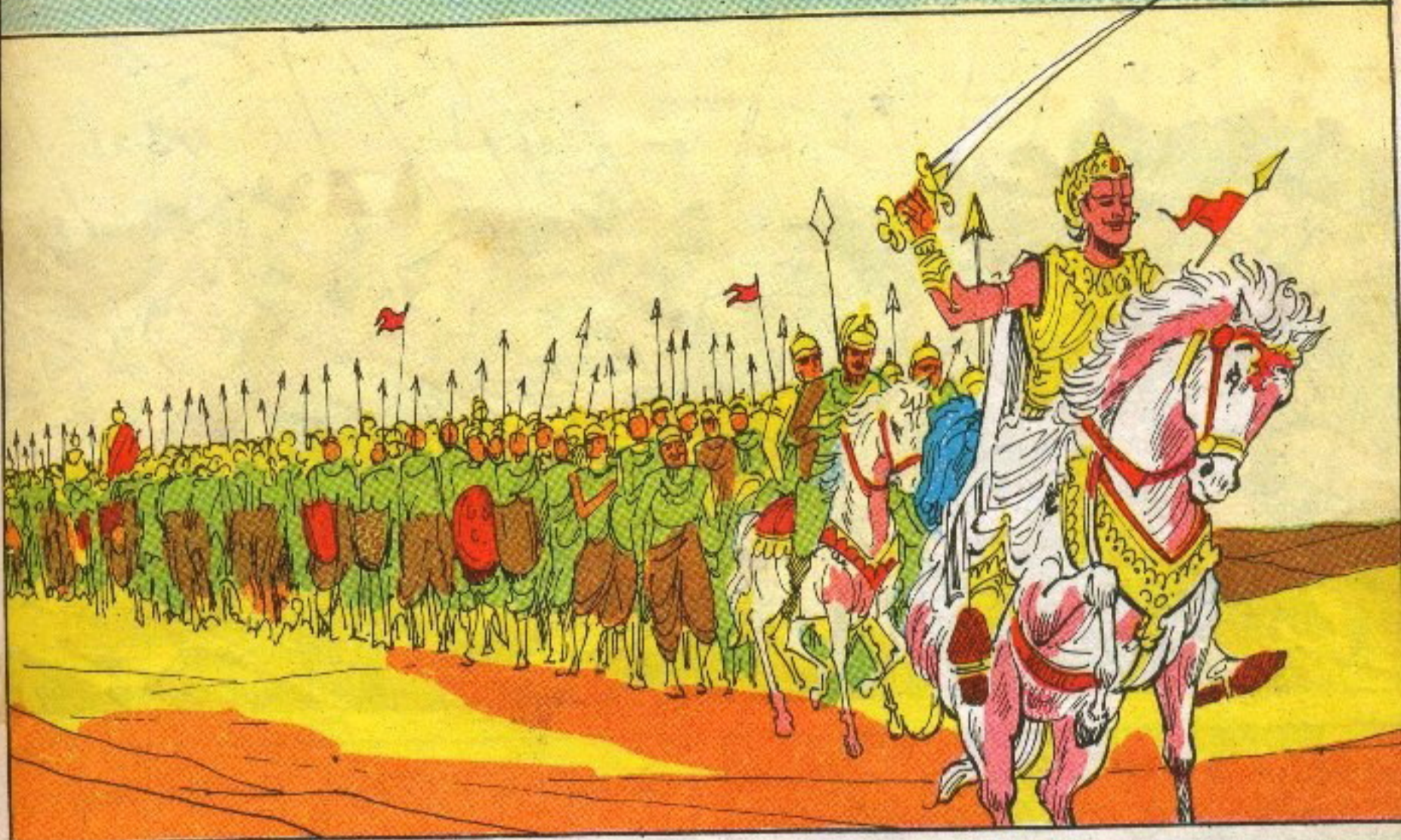
UNAWARE OF HARSHA'S PEACE-PLANS, THE GREAT SOUTH INDIAN KING, PULAKESHIN WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE RISING STRENGTH OF HARSHA.



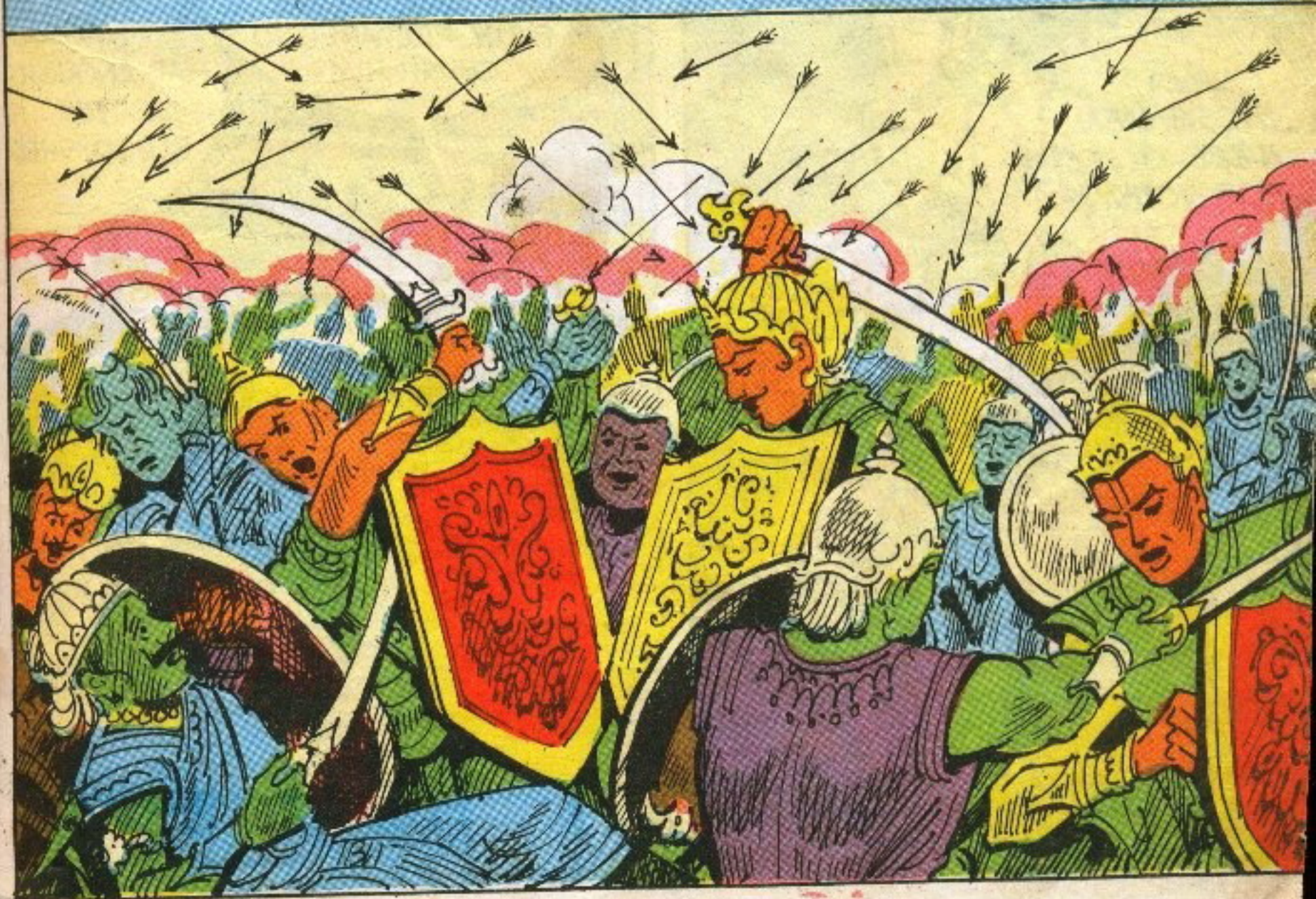
MAHARAJ PULAKESHIN, HARSHA HAS WON KINGDOMS AS FAR AS KATHIAWAR. HE MAY ATTACK US ONE DAY.

WE MUST ATTACK BEFORE HE DOES.

HARSHA WAS RETURNING HOME AFTER CONQUERING KATHIAWAR. HIS SOLDIERS WERE TIRED AND EAGER TO REACH HOME.



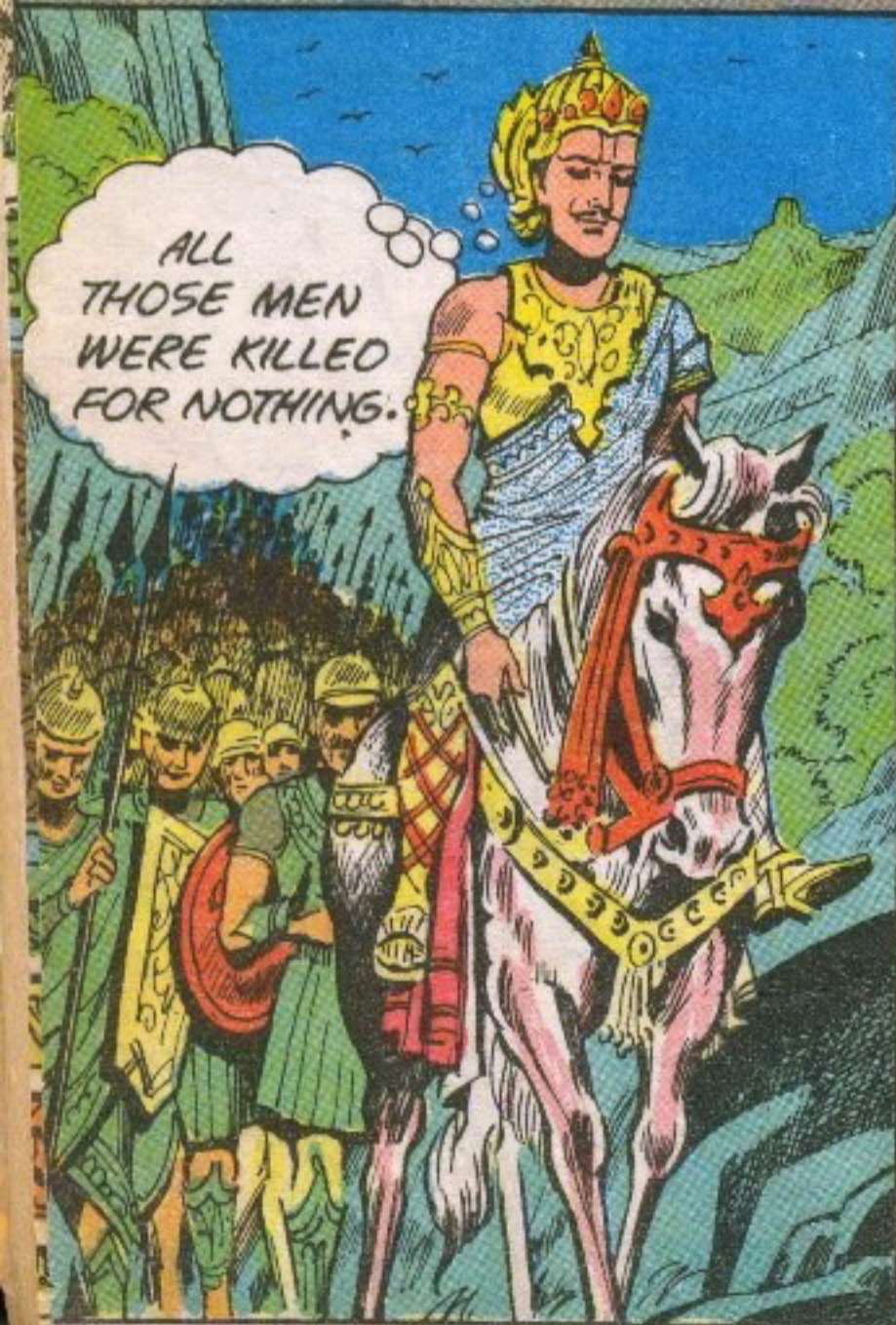
AND AT THAT MOMENT PULAKESHIN ATTACKED HARSHA.



THE FIGHTING CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.  
LOSSES WERE HEAVY ON BOTH SIDES.



HARSHA'S TIRED SOLDIERS HAD TO  
RETREAT. HE WAS VERY SAD.



SOMETIME LATER IN THANESHWAR -

MAHARAJ HARSHA, LET US  
ATTACK PULAKESHIN.  
THIS TIME WE ARE  
FULLY PREPARED TO  
CRUSH HIM.

I HAVE  
HAD ENOUGH  
OF THIS  
BLOOD-SHED.



THERE SHALL BE  
NO MORE  
WARS.

IN FUTURE,  
I SHALL USE  
MY STRENGTH  
TO PROTECT  
THE WEAK  
AND  
THE POOR.

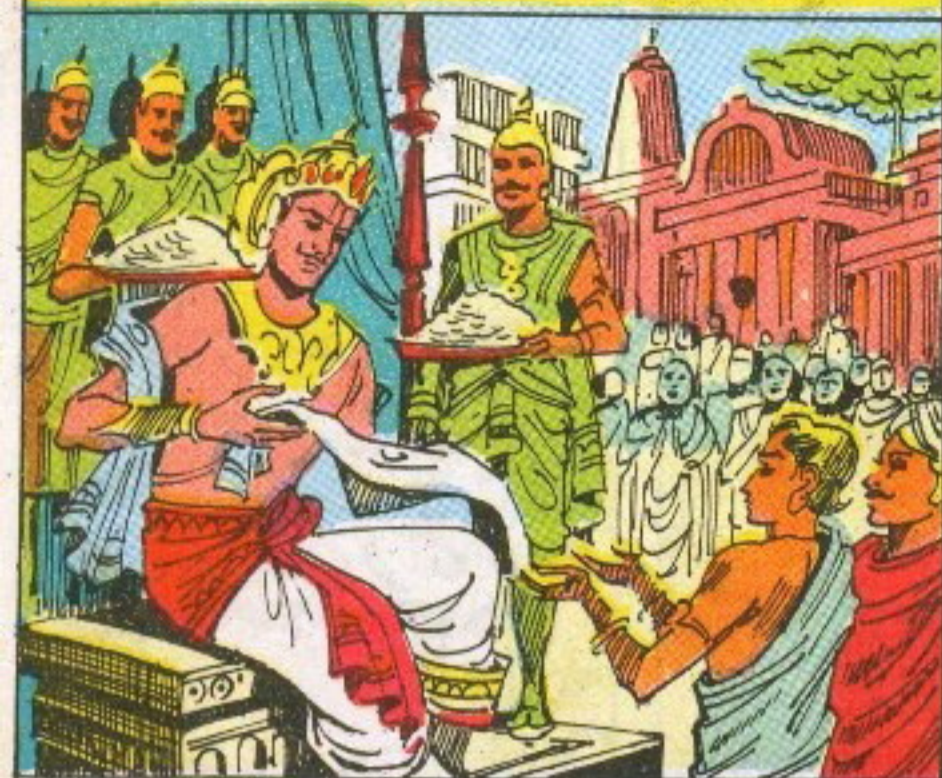


YOU ARE  
A NOBLE KING,  
MAHARAJ  
HARSHA.

LONG LIVE,  
MAHARAJ  
HARSHA.



TO FULFIL HIS DREAM, HARSHA GAVE  
FINANCIAL HELP TO THE POOR.



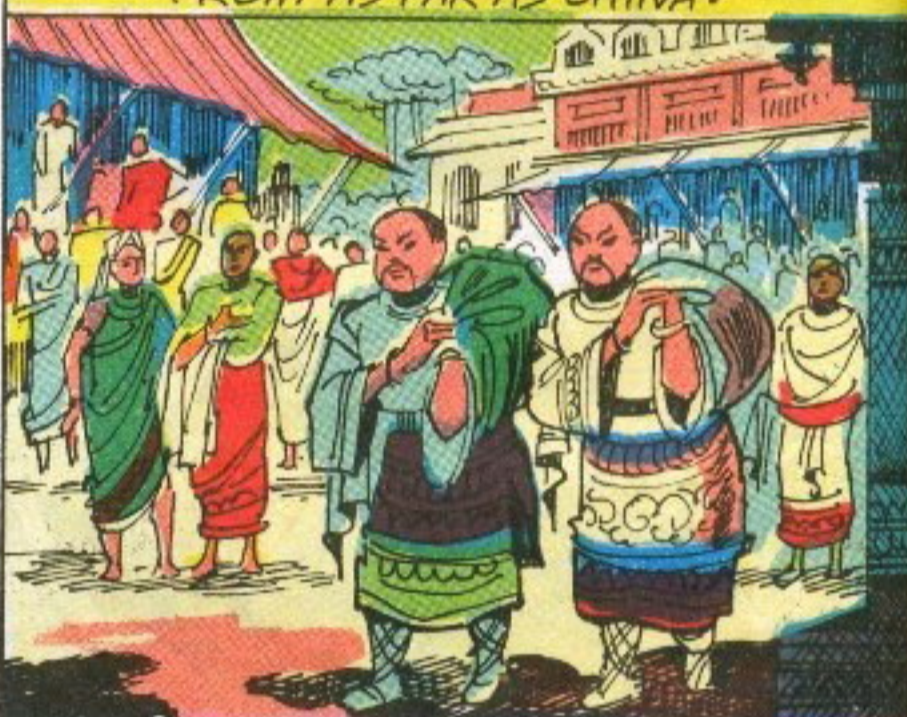
HE APPOINTED PHYSICIANS TO TREAT  
THE SICK FREE OF COST.



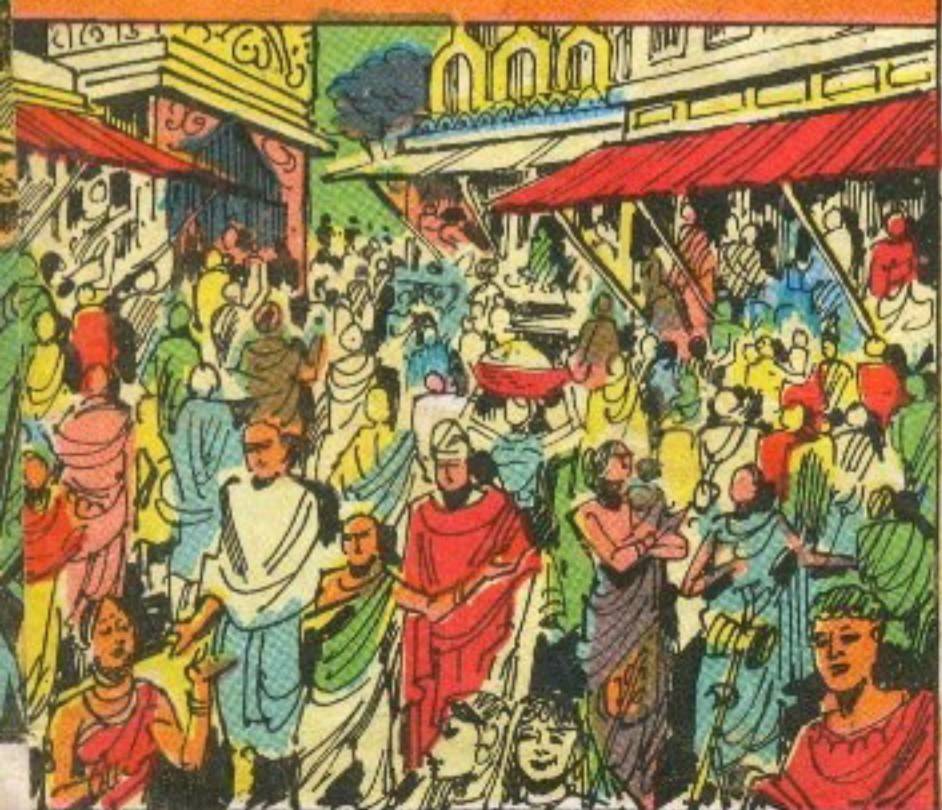
HE HELPED STUDENTS TO PURSUE  
THEIR STUDIES.



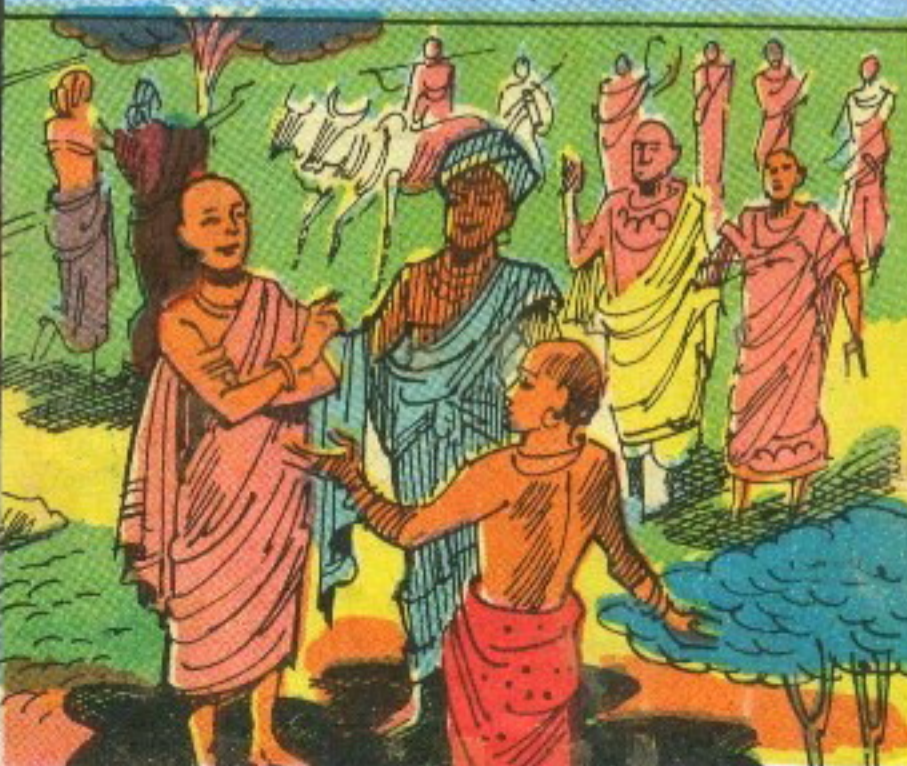
DURING HIS TIME, TRADERS CAME  
FROM AS FAR AS CHINA.



PEOPLE PROSPERED.



AND FOLLOWERS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS  
LIVED IN PEACE AND HARMONY.



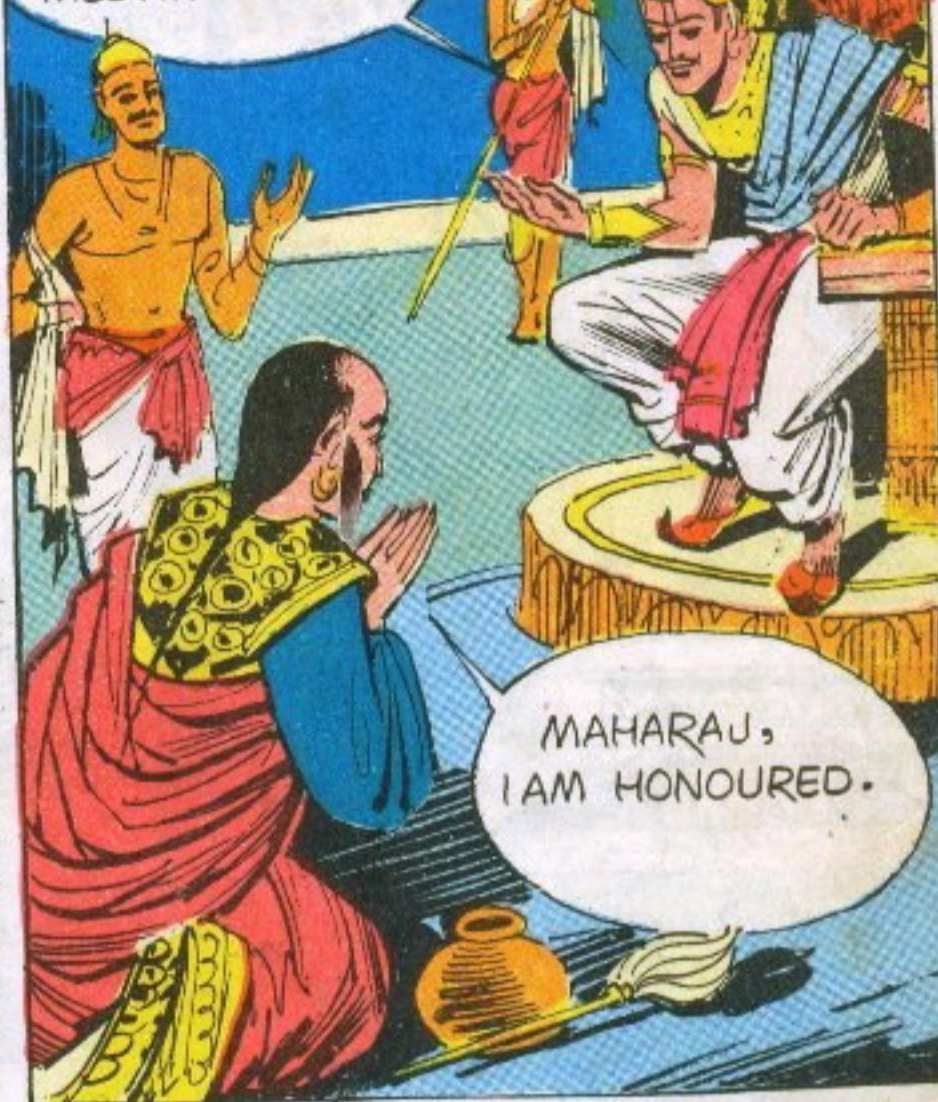
DURING THIS PERIOD, HIUEN TSANG, THE FAMOUS CHINESE PILGRIM AND SCHOLAR CAME TO INDIA. AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME IN EASTERN INDIA, HE MET HARSHA.

MAHARAJ, A BUDDHIST MONK WANTS TO SEE YOU.

BRING HIM IN.



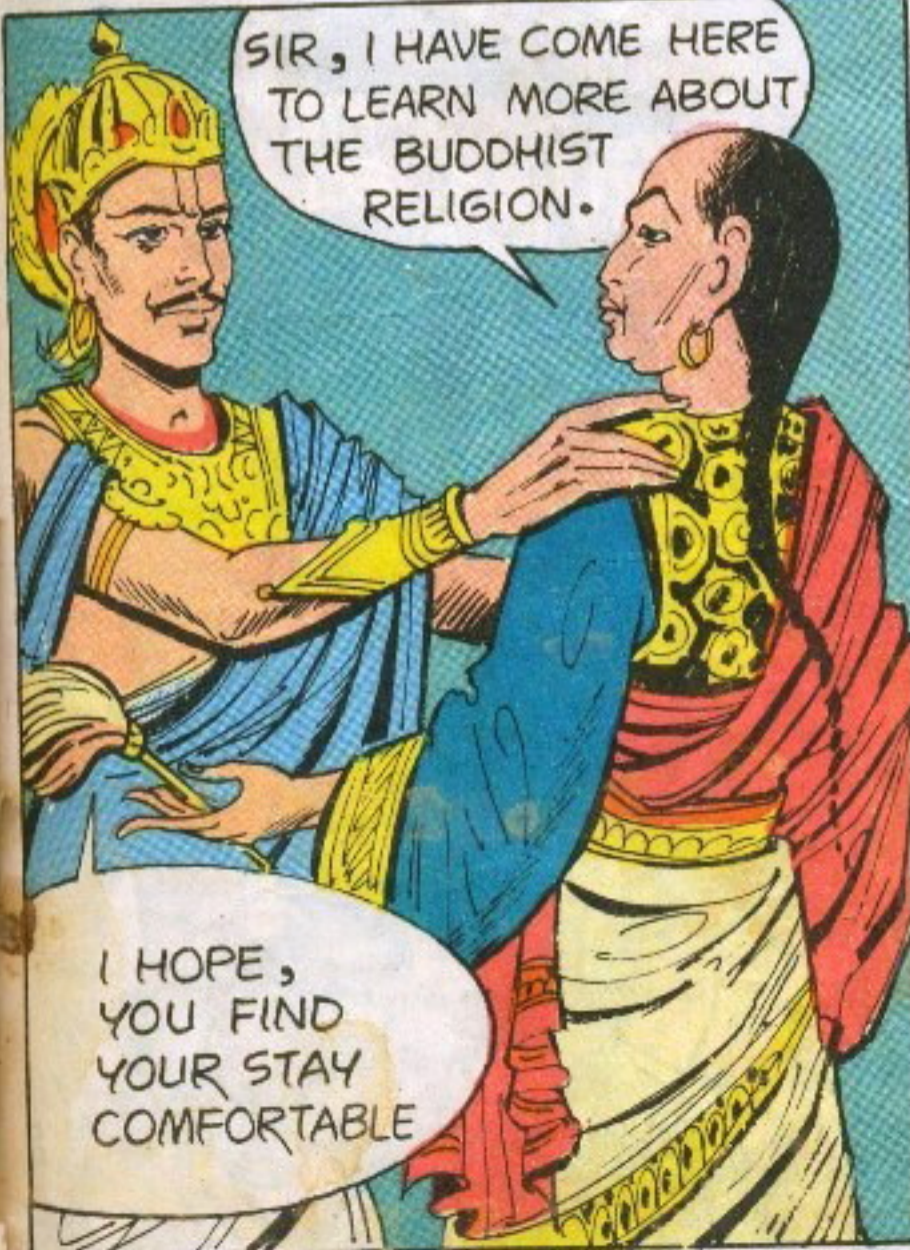
WELCOME, SCHOLAR HIUEN TSANG. I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU.



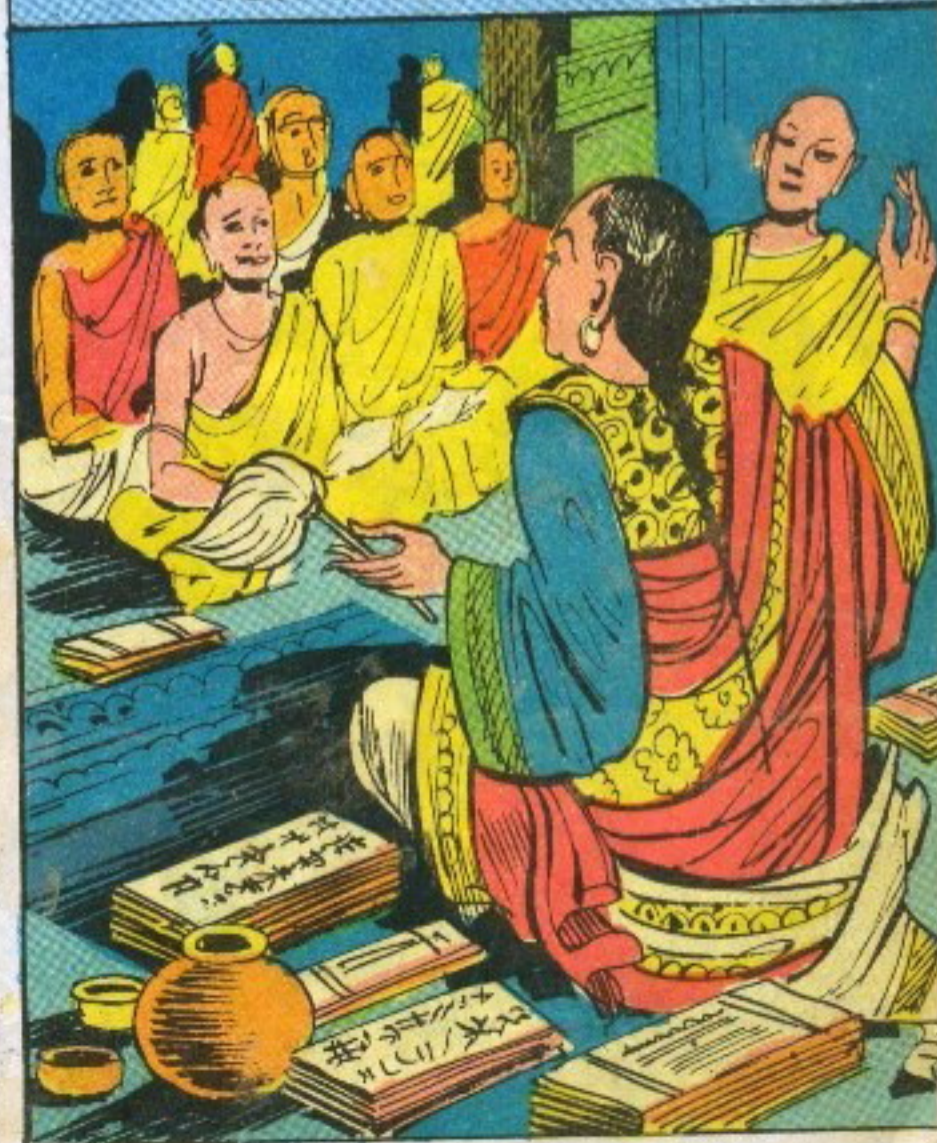
MAHARAJ, I AM HONOURED.

SIR, I HAVE COME HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BUDDHIST RELIGION.

I HOPE, YOU FIND YOUR STAY COMFORTABLE



HIUEN TSANG STAYED IN INDIA FOR A FEW YEARS.



DURING HIUEN TSANG'S STAY, HARSHA DECIDED TO HOLD  
A SEMINAR ON RELIGIONS.



EMINENT SCHOLARS OF HINDUISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM CAME  
TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SEMINAR.



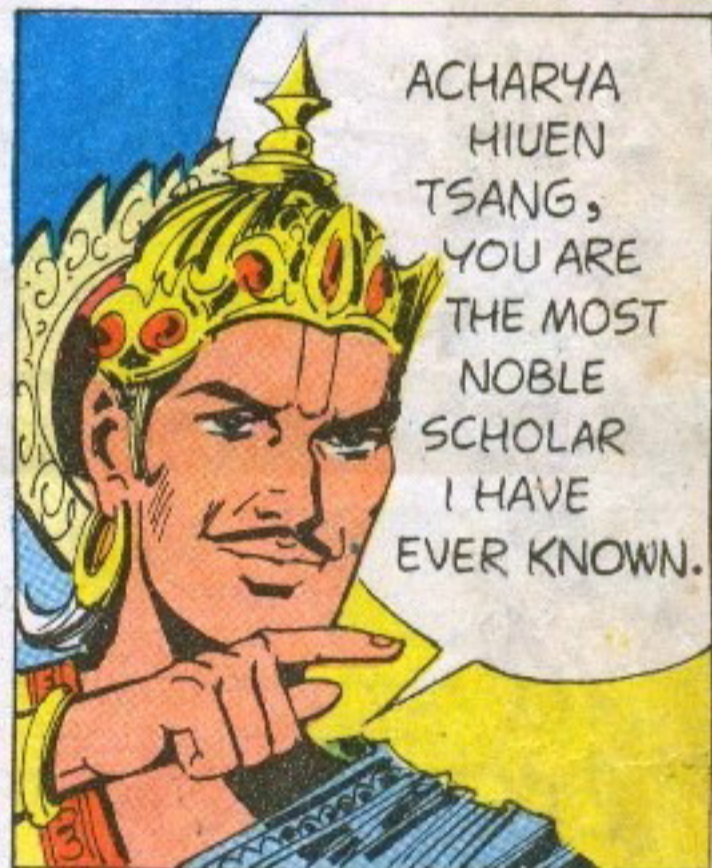
THE SEMINAR CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.



HUIEN TSANG TOO PARTICIPATED IN THE SEMINAR.



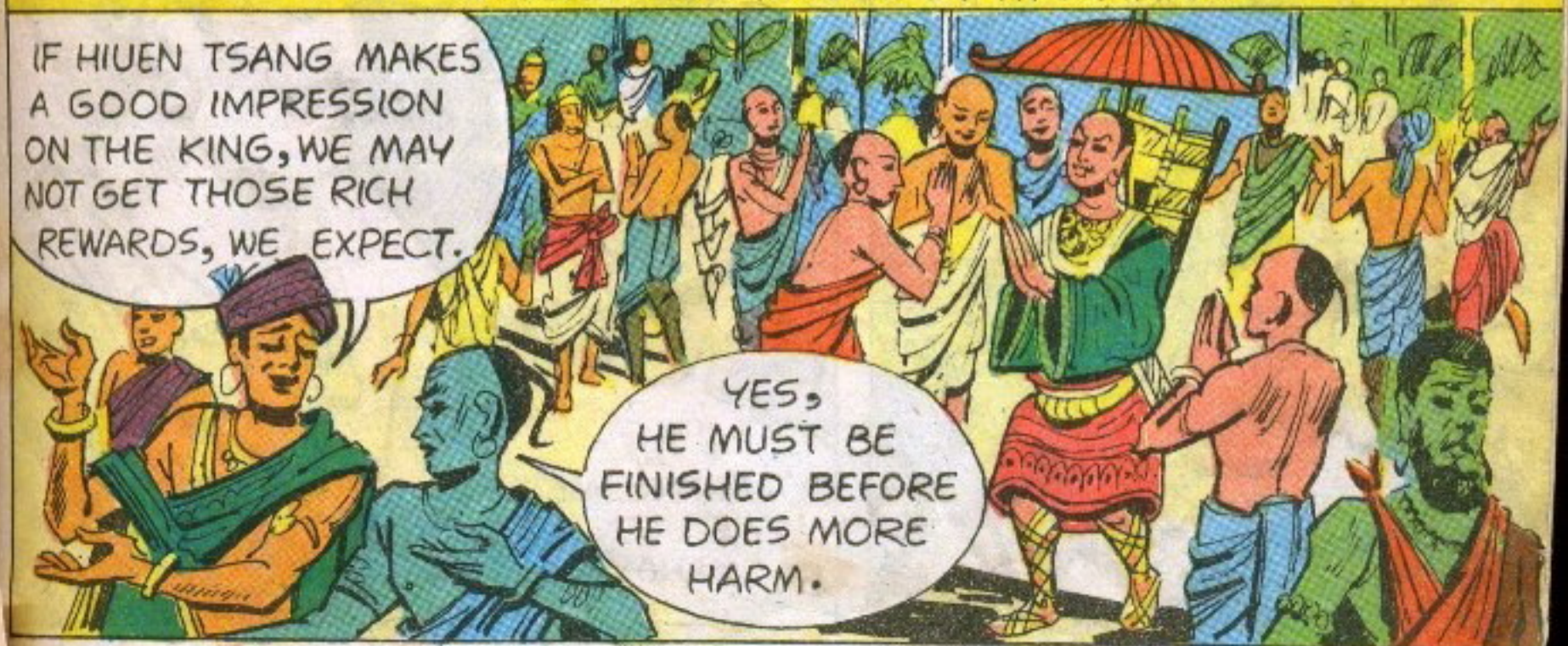
ACHARYA  
HUIEN  
TSANG,  
YOU ARE  
THE MOST  
NOBLE  
SCHOLAR  
I HAVE  
EVER KNOWN.



BUT SOME OF THE GREEDY PARTICIPANTS DID NOT LIKE THAT A FOREIGNER SHOULD BE PRAISED BY THEIR KING.

IF HUIEN TSANG MAKES  
A GOOD IMPRESSION  
ON THE KING, WE MAY  
NOT GET THOSE RICH  
REWARDS, WE EXPECT.

YES,  
HE MUST BE  
FINISHED BEFORE  
HE DOES MORE  
HARM.



BUT THIS CONSPIRACY WAS REPORTED TO HARSHA IMMEDIATELY.



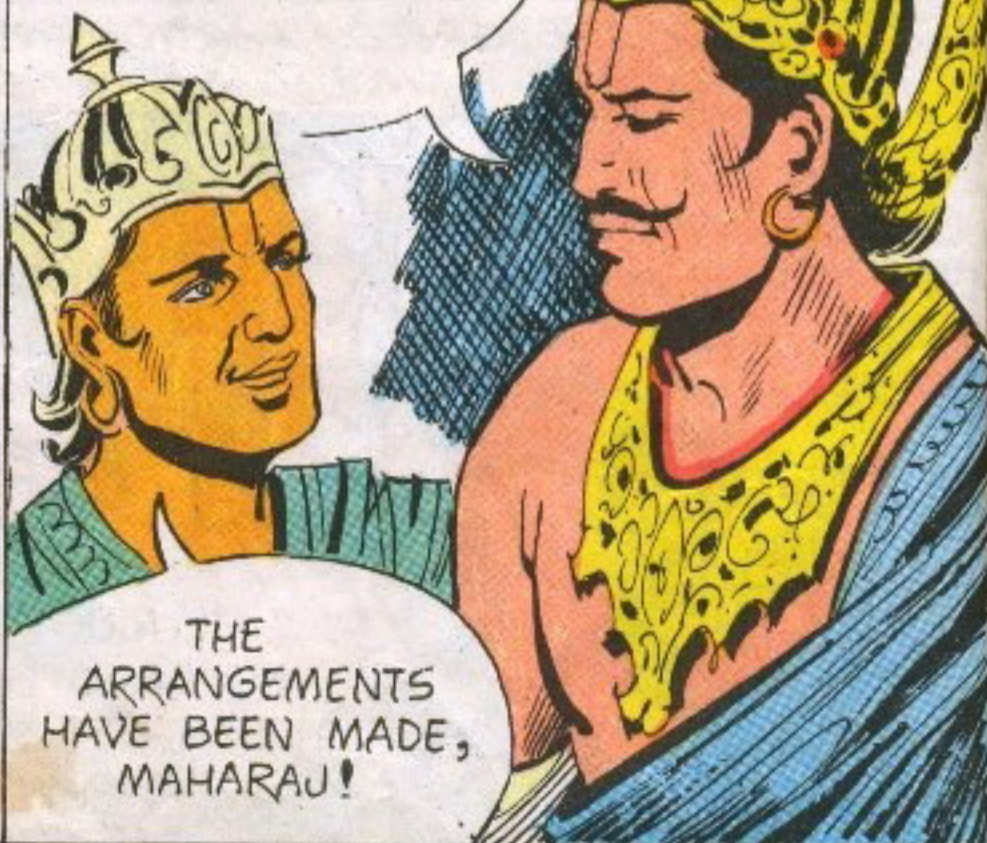
I WARN THE CONSPIRATORS THAT ANYBODY WHO TRIES TO HARM ACHARYA HIUEN TSANG SHALL BE PUNISHED. PROCLAIM THIS TO ALL.



I BELIEVE IN NON-VIOLENCE, THE POOR AND THE WEAK SHALL BE PROTECTED. THOSE WHO PREACH VIOLENCE SHALL PAY FOR IT WITH THEIR OWN LIVES.

AS A RESULT OF THIS STERN WARNING, NOBODY TRIED TO HARM HIUEN TSANG.

THE SEMINAR IS OVER. THE SCHOLARS SHOULD NOW BE PRESENTED WITH GIFTS.



THE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, MAHARAJ!

FROM THE NEXT DAY, HARSHA STARTED PRESENTING GIFTS TO THE SCHOLARS AND PRIESTS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS.

PLEASE ACCEPT  
THIS SMALL TOKEN  
OF MY APPRECIATION.

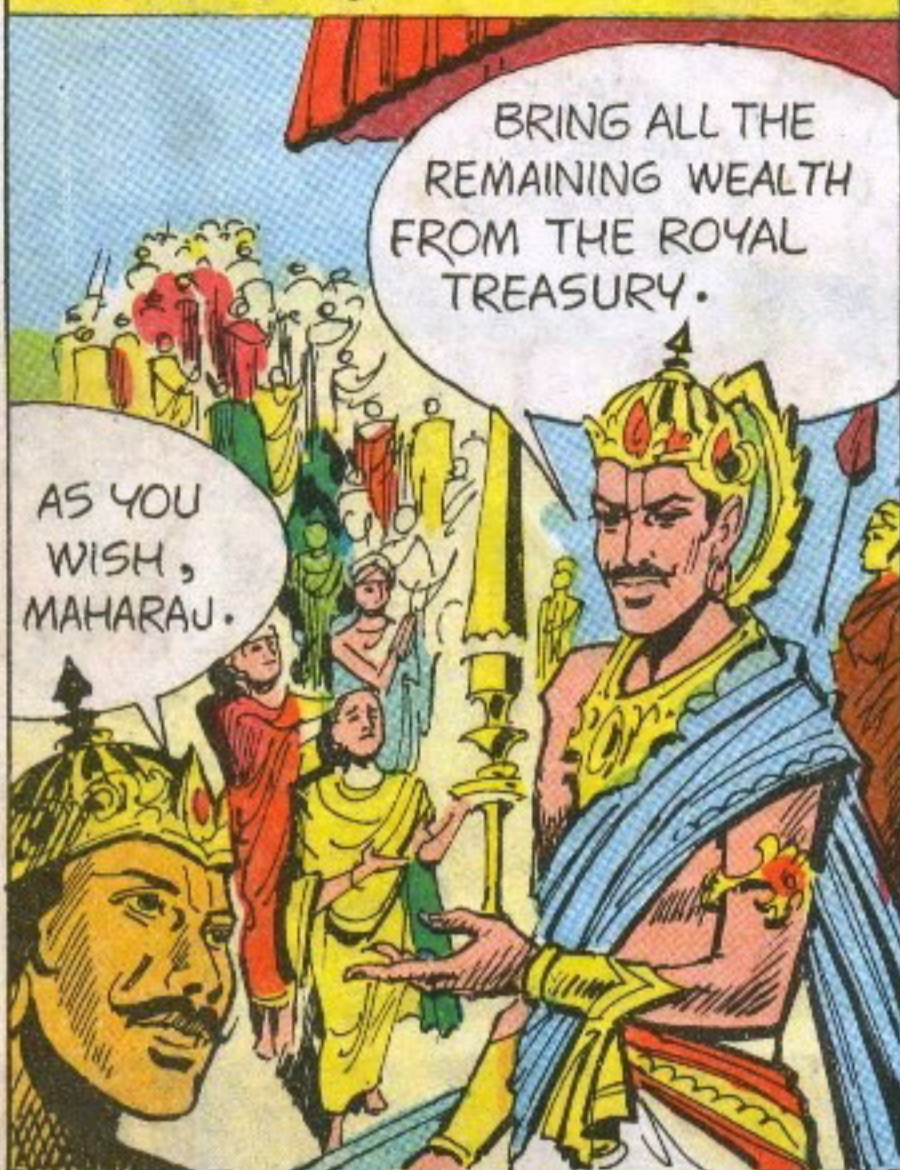
MAY GOD BE  
ALWAYS WITH YOU,  
KING HARSHA!



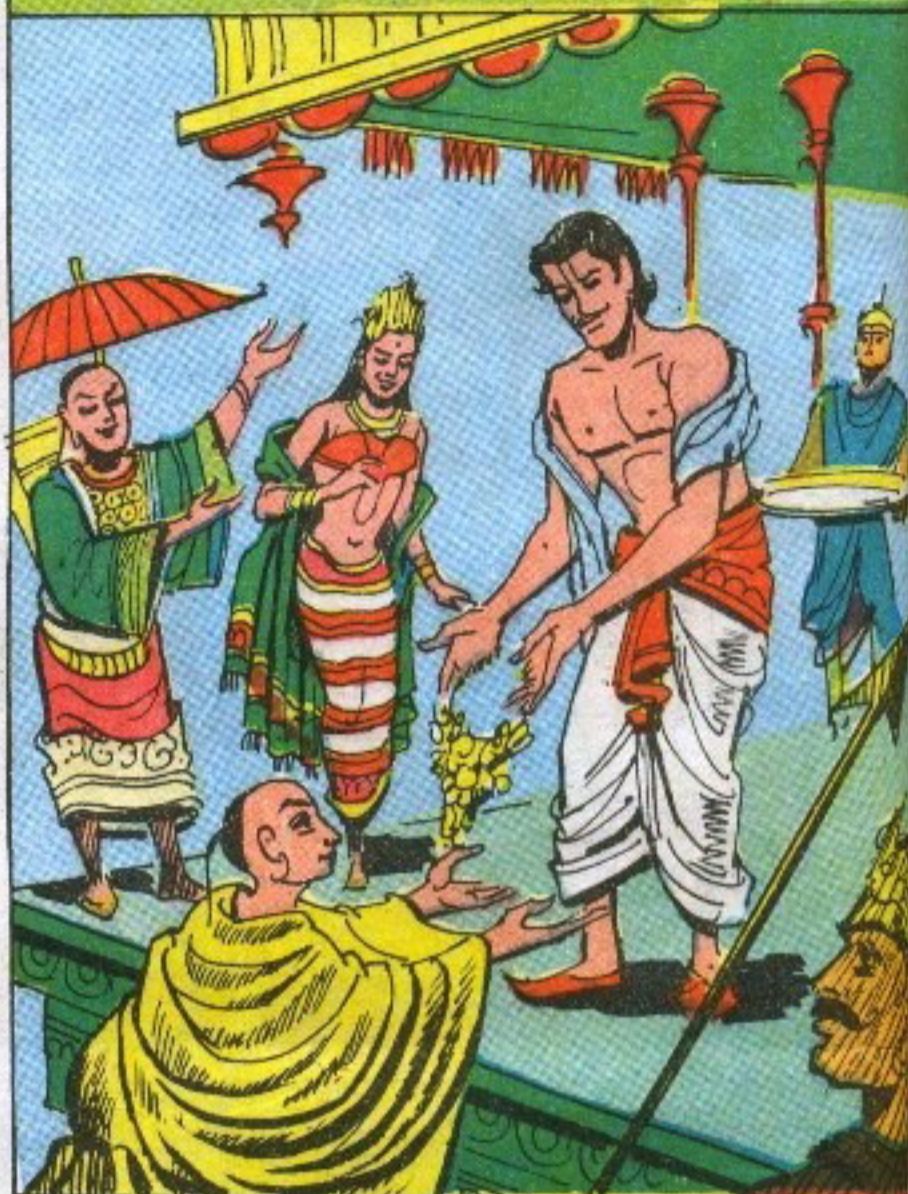
THEN CAME THE TURN OF POOR PEASANTS.



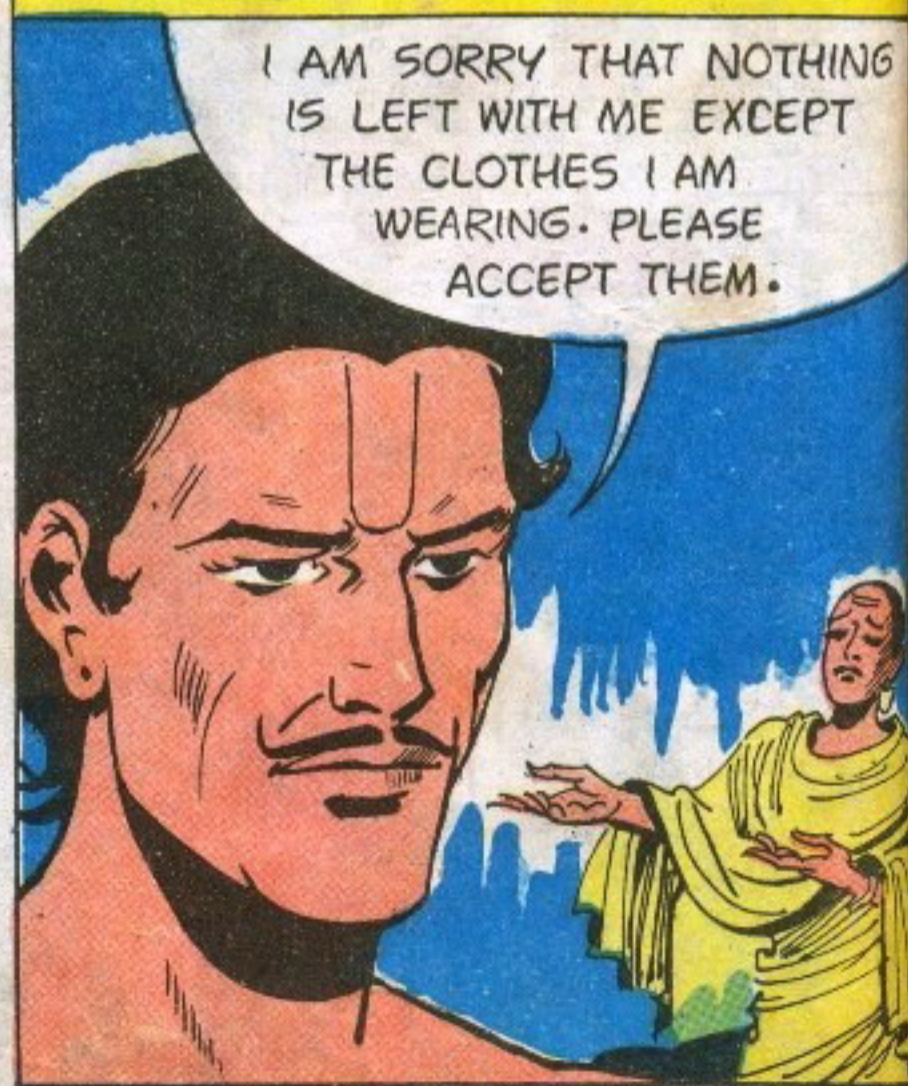
SOON THE GIFTS BROUGHT FOR DONATION WERE EXHAUSTED. BUT STILL MANY PEOPLE REMAINED WITHOUT GIFTS.



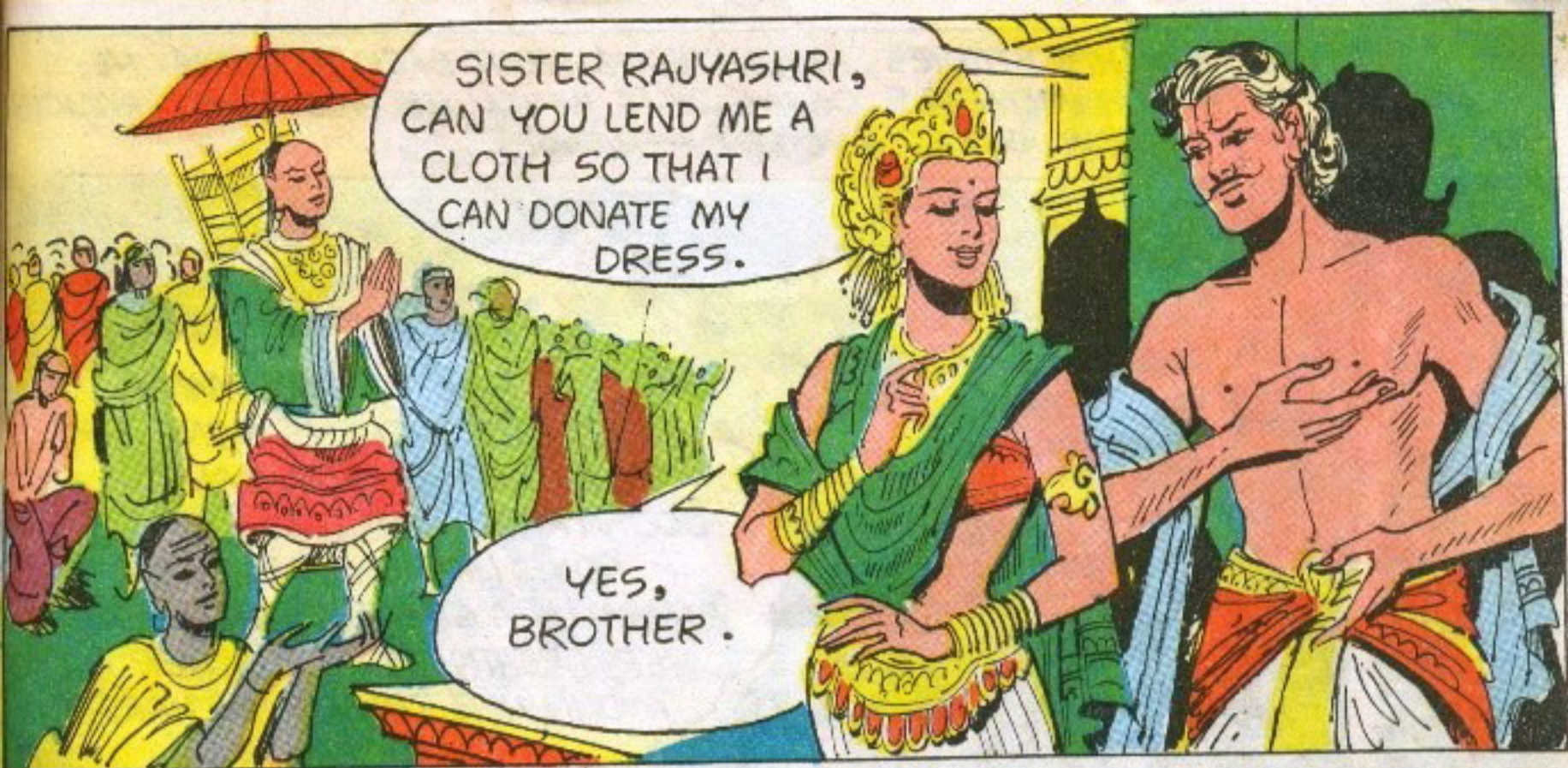
THE ROYAL WEALTH WAS ALSO GIVEN AWAY BUT EVEN THEN SOME PEOPLE WERE LEFT OUT.



IN THE END ONLY ONE MAN WAS LEFT OUT.



I AM SORRY THAT NOTHING IS LEFT WITH ME EXCEPT THE CLOTHES I AM WEARING. PLEASE ACCEPT THEM.



IN THIS MANNER, EVERY FIVE YEARS, HARSHA GAVE AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH TO  
THE SCHOLARS, THE PRIESTS AND THE POOR.



**A**FTER COMPLETING HIS STUDIES, HIJEN TSANG WENT BACK TO CHINA. HE CARRIED WITH HIM MEMOIRS OF HIS VISIT WHICH BECAME WORLD FAMOUS AS TESTIMONIES OF OUR GREAT ANCIENT HERITAGE.

**I** HAVE KNOWN MANY KINGS BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE HARSHA. I HAVE SEEN MANY COUNTRIES BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE BHARAT. TRULY BHARAT IS A GREAT COUNTRY AND HER GREATNESS LIES IN HER PEOPLE AND IN HER RULERS LIKE HARSHA.

